

Sermon Outline

**“GOD THE LORD IS MY STRENGTH”:
FINDING OUR CONTENTMENT AND HAPPINESS IN GOD**

NOT BY BREAD ALONE

Deuteronomy 8:3

I. Introduction

II. The Commandment(s) of God-Centeredness

- A. The highest ethical principle in the universe is *God-centeredness*.
1. God-centeredness is the great principle/law that tells us we should find our greatest happiness in God and that God’s will should also be our will.
 2. To be centered on God is to have one’s heart fully consumed in the adoration of God. It is to become a perfect reflection of God’s will.
- B. After rescuing Israel from Egypt, God wanted his people to learn this lesson.
- C. In Deuteronomy, Israel is finally ready to enter the Promised Land, after forty years in the wilderness.
- D. Before Israel begins this new chapter in their lives, Moses reminds them of the major lessons of the wilderness.
- E. Deuteronomy 8 starts this way: “The whole commandment that I command you today you shall be careful to do, that you may live and multiply, and go in and possess the land that the LORD swore to give to your fathers.”
- F. In verse 2, the Lord instructs his people to remember how he guided them through the difficult years in the wilderness.
1. There was a pedagogical purpose behind the forty years in the wilderness.
 2. While Israel’s wilderness wanderings were partly a punishment for their disobedience (Num 14:20-24), God also wanted to use the forty years in the desert as a way of humbling Israel and helping them discern their own hearts. How true and deep was Israel’s trust and love for God?
 3. When hard times come, when precious things are taken from us...
 - will we start complaining?
 - will we withdraw from others?
 - will we cease praying and become angry at God?

III. Every Word from the Mouth of the Lord (Deuteronomy 8:3)

- A. In verse 3, Moses says, “And he humbled you and let you hunger and fed you with manna, which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that he might make you know *that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD.*”
- B. In the immediate context of verse 3, we hear Moses talking about how God was the One who allowed Israel to go hungry.
1. “And he humbled you and let you hunger...”
 - a. When God took Israel into the wilderness, Israel was completely at the mercy of the Lord.
 - b. It was the Lord who removed the trusted sources of food that Israel was used to back in Egypt.
 2. But the hunger was not for long. When Israel cried out to the Lord, the Lord “fed you with manna...”
 - Exodus 16:31: “It was like coriander seed, white, and the taste of it was like wafers made with honey.”
 - Exodus 16:35, “The people of Israel ate the manna forty years, till they came to a habitable land. They ate the manna till they came to the border of the land of Canaan.”
- C. God’s allowing Israel to hunger and then satisfying that hunger with manna was to teach a specific lesson: “know that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD.”
1. Physical food is not our ultimate means of sustenance.
 2. Our ultimate sustenance is “every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD.”
 3. It was *God* who allowed his people to hunger—and it was *God* who provided manna for his people.
 4. Thus, “every word” refers to the sovereign and loving decrees of God toward his people. God does things by his word.
 5. We saw this at the start of the book of Genesis, when God made the universe by his words. And then there are other passages that teach this as well (Ps 148:5-8; Jn 1:10). It was God who commanded the manna to fall.
- D. God was the source of the manna.
- Exodus 16:4: “Then the LORD said to Moses, ‘Behold, I am about to rain bread from heaven for you, and the people shall go out and gather a day’s portion every day, that I may test them, whether they will walk in my law or not.’”
 - Exodus 16:11-12: “And the LORD said to Moses, ¹² ‘I have heard the grumbling of the people of Israel. Say to them, ‘At twilight you shall eat meat, and in the morning you shall be filled with bread. Then you shall know that I am the LORD your God.’”

IV. Keep the Commandments of the Lord (Deuteronomy 8:4-6)

- A. Having taught Israel that man lives not on bread alone but on God's Word, Moses reminds Israel of how the Lord cared for them all those years (vv 4, 5).
- B. In verse 6, we come to the practical implication of what we have just read: "So you shall keep the commandments of the LORD your God by walking in his ways and by fearing him." (Or KJV: "Therefore thou shalt keep the commandments of the LORD thy God, to walk in his ways, and to fear him.").
- C. So "every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD" is a comprehensive phrase. It includes...
 - 1. God's loving decrees toward his people.
 - 2. every word of God's Law.
- D. Many centuries later, the Lord Jesus will say a similar thing:
"Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' ³² For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. ³³ But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you" (Mt 6:31-33)
- E. The Church marches to the beat of a different drum than the world: "seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness..." and "...keep the commandments of the LORD your God by walking in his ways and by fearing him."
- F. If we have ears to hear and eyes to see, we can see that hidden beneath this call is really a call to trust God with your life, to trust that God is good, that God loves you, that God is sufficient for all our needs, that God is worth living for.

V. The Son Who Lived by Every Word of God

- A. But most of all, *recognize that Jesus has already done all this for you.*
- B. As we seek to grow in our satisfaction with God and the keeping of his commandments, we must recognize that our hopes are based on something else. Our hope is based on the fact that Jesus has done it for us.

¹ Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. ² And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. ³ And the tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread." ⁴ But he answered, "It is written,
"Man shall not live by bread alone,
but by every word that comes from the mouth of God."

- C. When you are tempted to despair in your journey, whenever you fail in your own quest to live by every word of God, you must know that Jesus has already succeeded on your behalf.
- D. In the end, Jesus was the one human being who knew fully what it meant to live not by bread alone but by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord.
- E. Because Jesus lived fully according to God's commandments, he has earned eternal life for all who trust in him.
- F. As we read Deuteronomy 8, we realize that it was not written ultimately to us. It was God's own word to his Son—the Son who would fulfil this very commandment for his people one day.

You and I are seeking to grow in our satisfaction in God. We should also be seeking a greater keeping of God's commandments, because we know that God is worth it. But it was Jesus who first obeyed this rule *completely*. By his loving and flawless obedience on our behalf, Jesus became our satisfaction in God, our keeping of God's every command, our living by God's every word (cf. Rom 10:4; 1 Cor 1:30, 31). If we want to develop a deeper satisfaction in God, a greater keeping of God's commandments, we must go to the only One who has done all these things for us.

Questions for Further Reflection

1. Is there anything about today's sermon that blessed and encouraged you?
2. According to Dt 8:3, what was the purpose of God's leading his people in the wilderness for forty years?
3. What does it mean to live by "every word" from God?
4. How are we still controlled by food and other things we need for survival and wellbeing? How does this control show in our lives? (Again, look at your anxieties (Mt 6:31-33). What do they tell you about yourself, your heart?)
5. How did Jesus fulfil Dt 8:3 for us?
6. How does going to Jesus lead to the fulfilment of this command in our lives? How does the knowledge that Jesus fully lived by every word of God help us to grow in our own satisfaction with God?